

Democrats plot major escalation of Ukraine war after midterm election

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The midterm elections in the United States, now less than three weeks away, are expected to deliver a repudiation of US President Donald Trump and his policies of war, dictatorship and social austerity. Trump's approval rating is at a record low.

While appealing to working-class anger over the cost of living and social inequality, the Democrats are making clear that their central priority is a massive and catastrophic escalation of the war against Russia. The Democrats agree with Trump's assault on social programs and the working class. Their conflict with Trump turns above all on what they claim is his insufficiently aggressive and consistent pursuit of the global interests of American imperialism.

Representative Jim Himes of Connecticut, the ranking Democrat on the House Intelligence Committee, speaking for the party's leadership at the Warsaw Security Forum on October 13, declared that a Democratic Congress "means that aid packages [to Ukraine] move not in nine months, but in nine days or nine weeks." "If Democrats gain control on Capitol Hill, renewed Ukraine aid will be a priority," the trade publication *Breaking Defense* wrote, reporting his remarks.

The Democratic Party and the media are preparing for this escalation by whipping up war hysteria among the affluent upper middle class and denouncing Trump as too soft on Russia.

The Democratic agitation against Trump centers on his temporary "energy ceasefire" with Russian President Vladimir Putin, a political expedient to allow the sale of Russian diesel fuel. The Democrats denounced the deal within hours, and on October 13 a bipartisan group of 12 senators demanded that Trump rescind it as "a gift to our adversary."

The *New York Times*, which functions as a house

organ of the Democratic Party, has led the campaign. In the first half of October alone it published at least 20 reports, analyses and columns built around supposed Russian threats to Europe, Ukrainian battlefield successes and the danger of easing pressure on Moscow.

Unproven allegations are presented as established fact. On October 2, the newspaper featured a purported intercepted Russian plan to destroy Ukraine's energy grid, while conceding that it could not authenticate the document. On October 9, Steven Erlanger treated a Russian "shadow war" of sabotage in Europe as settled, acknowledged that many of the incidents are difficult to attribute to Moscow, and then aired proposals for cyberattacks on Russian infrastructure.

Then, on October 15, the *Times* published two columns that sum up the campaign. Under the headline "Trump's Democracy-for-Diesel Deal Shames Us All," Thomas Friedman wrote, "Donald Trump, meet Neville Chamberlain," comparing him to the British prime minister who appeased Hitler at Munich in 1938. David French wrote that Trump "is throwing Vladimir Putin a lifeline."

Friedman writes that Trump will enter history among the leaders who "sold out their country's democratic values to appease a dictator." Friedman is the last man on earth entitled to lecture anyone about democratic values. During NATO's bombing of Serbia in 1999 he wrote, "Every week you ravage Kosovo is another decade we will set your country back by pulverizing you. You want 1950? We can do 1950. You want 1389? We can do 1389 too."

In a manifesto published the same year he declared that "the hidden hand of the market will never work without a hidden fist—McDonald's cannot flourish without McDonnell Douglas, the builder of the F-15."

The US-NATO war in Ukraine that Friedman champions is motivated by similar considerations. American imperialism seeks complete domination of Russia and a regime in Moscow that will give American capital unrestricted access to the country's vast resources.

The dispute over diesel reveals the class content of the policies of both factions. Fuel prices have been driven up by Trump's own war against Iran, and his deal with Putin is an electoral stunt that will do little to bring them down. Friedman denounces this by writing that Trump is "desperate to lower diesel prices, which are hurting Republicans in the midterms." The *Times* and the Democrats demand instead tighter sanctions that would push fuel prices higher still, with devastating consequences for the working class.

In his column, French states the war aims even more bluntly. He celebrates Ukraine's success at "striking deep into the Russian heartland" and quotes former CIA Director David Petraeus boasting that Ukraine is "essentially starving Crimea of fuel." The column drops any pretense that the goal is anything short of the military defeat of Russia.

French also concedes what the *Times* has spent years denying. Ukraine, he writes, depends "on American intelligence and on American weapons it's able to purchase with European funds." The United States and NATO are waging the war, with Ukraine as their instrument.

The hysteria in the press expresses the increasingly desperate situation confronting American imperialism. "Remove that support, and Russia has a chance to win the war," French writes. The ruling class fears that the front it has built in Ukraine could collapse.

French's own account of the fighting is an indictment of the war into which US and European imperialism have dragged the populations of Ukraine and Russia. He describes "a bloody stalemate more like the drone war version of World War I's Battle of Verdun, where the lines barely move and both sides bleed for every inch of ground they take." He offers the comparison as a case for continuing the slaughter.

French writes that Russia is avoiding "a direct conflict with NATO that Russia would almost certainly lose." In a column of more than 2,000 words, he never mentions that Russia is the world's largest nuclear weapons power. Last month, Russia's embassy in

Ireland said Russia "would be ready to use all its arsenal, including nuclear weapons, to defend its territory if NATO countries try to isolate the Kaliningrad region from the rest of the country."

Since then, the NATO powers have expanded their troop deployments on Russia's borders. NATO's supreme allied commander in Europe, US Air Force General Alexis Grynkewich, declared at the Warsaw Security Forum on October 12, in a veiled threat against Russia, that in the event of war the alliance would target "not just the attacking force itself, but anything and everything that supports, sustains, or controls that force."

Both columns fraudulently present the Ukrainian regime as a democracy, Ukraine is, in fact, governed under martial law. In August a Ukrainian court sentenced Bogdan Syrotyuk, a 27-year-old socialist, to 15 years in prison for high treason, convicting him of opposing the war and calling on Ukrainian and Russian workers to unite against it.

The media campaign is aimed at the upper middle class, the social base of the Democratic Party. Its purpose is to divert mass opposition to Trump behind the pro-war agenda of the Democrats, so that the political establishment can claim every vote cast against the Republicans is an endorsement of a wider war. The hostility of millions of workers and young people to Trump's wars and his drive to dictatorship cannot find expression through a party preparing to escalate the war against Russia.

The cost of the escalation of war being prepared after the election will fall on the working class. With the federal debt soaring, every dollar for war will come from Medicaid, Medicare, Social Security and public education.

The fight against war, austerity and attacks on democratic rights cannot be waged through either party of American imperialism. It requires the independent mobilization of the working class, armed with a socialist program.



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